

Diversions

Get Out of the Country

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*Travel abroad
can change
views, lives*

They say even the ice cream tastes better there. On the Ile St. Louis in the middle of the Seine River, street vendors sell the ice cream Parisians say is the best in the city while the shadow of the storied cathedral of Notre Dame looms in the background in the heart of downtown Paris on a hot summer day.

Couples wander down the banks of the Seine taking in the city lights, the Berthillon ice cream melts delectably in your mouth, and the world suddenly seems like a nice place to be.

Whether the place is Paris, Prague or just parts unknown, the adventures are waiting for students with a desire to see the world.

There are many programs available to help students see the world from top to bottom through study, work or travel.

It can easily become the trip of a lifetime.

Traveling the world can give students a new perspective on life and teach them new skills, and it looks good on a resume.

Oh, and it may even be fun.

There are many different study and work programs designed to make travel more affordable and meaningful for students.

"Leave your cultural baggage at home, and have an open mind," University of Nebraska-Lincoln junior Spanish and English major Mike Garcia said after returning from nine months in Madrid, Spain. "I'd definitely recommend it."

Long-term stays in a foreign country help students go beyond the monuments and attractions to gain an understanding of the culture.

"I realized there is a lot more outside these walls, this state and this country," said Mike Kimmel, a junior biological systems engineering major, who spent four months in Germany.

For many long-term travelers, everyday activities can be the most memorable.

"In Madrid, I had to learn to rely on public transportation," Garcia said, "and before I went, I'd never even seen a subway, except on TV."

Study abroad programs can run as short as two weeks and as long as one year.

Students can go anywhere in the world, Christa Joy, Study Abroad coordinator, said.

Many of the study programs are in English, though those with language training can immerse themselves in a language, Joy said.

Jared Finklin, a UNL senior English major, went to

Cuerna Vaca, Mexico, this summer to work on his Spanish.

"I learned more in seven weeks (in Mexico) than I did in a year and a half of college Spanish," Finklin said. "You're forced to learn the language."

GETTING STARTED

Last year, almost 400 UNL students took the opportunity to study in other countries.

The cost of study abroad programs varies, but the amount of financial aid remains unchanged for students.

And additional scholarships are available for students studying abroad.

One of the more common programs available to students costs \$4,300, which includes tuition, books and room and board.

Airfare will vary between approximately \$750 and \$1,500, depending upon destination and time of year.

With that program, students can choose from 120 different universities worldwide.

Some study programs allow students to pay the same tuition at their home university and then exchange places with a student from another university.

Then the only added cost to the student is airfare and spending money.

And International Affairs' Flights & Travel Services office offers students some of the best available deals on airfare.

With an International Student ID card (\$20 at International Affairs) students can save \$200-\$400 over airline and travel agency prices.

Work and volunteer programs are another good option for students, Joy said. Such programs help students get the necessary work permits to work legally in other countries.

Sometimes students can find a job before they arrive in the foreign country, but many times they find something after they get there, Joy said.

With a little work and planning, Joy said, students can find a job related to their career field.

"It's important to be aware of what's going on in the world, whatever your field is," Joy said.

GETTING AROUND

For those students who want to travel the continent while overseas, there are plenty of ways to make it happen.

"There is no substitute for being there," Garcia said.

In Europe the railroad is the best way to get around the continent, and there are good deals on youth (under 26 years old) travel passes.

The passes are available only in North America.

Eurail passes offer unlimited travel for periods of 15 or 21 days and one, two or three months.

Another rail pass option is the Flexipass, which offers 10 or 15 days of travel within a two-month period for more flexibility.

But students considering a rail pass should first decide where they want to travel and add up the individual fares to see if the total cost is more than the cost of a Eurail pass, advised the authors of "Let's Go Europe 1998," a guidebook written by Harvard University students.

A good guidebook can be an invaluable resource when traveling.

Guidebooks are generally written to a specific budget level, and their listings reflect that.

The "Let's Go" and "On the Loose" series written by students from Harvard and Berkeley universities, respectively, are a good bet for low budget travel advice.

Other travel information can be found on the World Wide Web, at the International Affairs office and from people who have been there, Joy said.

Once budget travelers arrive at their destination, they must find the best deal for their souvenir dollar. Travelers should be aware of the exchange rate, so they can know how much they are spending.

Remember, credit cards and bank cards

get better exchange rates than individuals do because those institutions get a bulk rate.

Also, credit cards and ATMs don't carry large service charges like those common at exchange offices.

Most souvenir shops in each city will carry a similar fare of trinkets, so if prices aren't right in one shop, try next door.

When traveling, the best deals may be found on products made in that country, such as Birkenstock sandals in Germany or Doc Martens shoes in England.

Many countries also offer tax-free shopping for tourists. Shoppers get a refund check at the store for the amount of the sales tax, which can be cashed at the airport upon leaving.

Another money-saving tactic for budget travelers is staying at hostels.

Hostels offer dormitory-style sleeping with six to 10 people in a room, shared bathrooms and a cafeteria for \$6-\$25 a night.

There are thousands of hostels worldwide, usually in city centers, designed to help young people see the world.

Hostels also are a great place to meet other young travelers.

While traveling, students undoubtedly encounter difficult situations and problems they have to solve, Joy said.

"Students learn what it feels like to be a foreigner," Joy said, "and how to handle themselves in different situations."

But experienced travelers have learned two simple steps to make the trip more enjoyable.

"Get everything you think you want to bring together, and then pack less and bring more money," Garcia said.

Spending time abroad can even change the way students think, Joy said.

"They come to the realization that people think differently."

**What to
bring...**

